



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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KENTUCKY GRANTED NCLB FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – With the granting of flexibility under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind (ESEA/NCLB), Kentucky's public school system will have one comprehensive system of accountability for both state and federal purposes to ensure college/career readiness for all students.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced today that Kentucky's application for flexibility under ESEA/NCLB has been approved. The application and related appendices may be seen on KDE's Unbridled Learning page.

"Kentucky is once again leading the nation in the area of public school accountability," said Gov. Steve Beshear. "This federal flexibility opens a new chapter in the Commonwealth's work to ensure a well-educated citizenry. I congratulate our teachers, administrators, state agency staff, Kentucky Board of Education members, legislators and education partners on this great accomplishment."

"The granting of this request means that Kentucky can continue the forward momentum that began with the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 2009," said Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday. "The accountability model that we will use for state and federal purposes provides in-depth information about every school and district, so that we can focus our resources on the areas of greatest need and challenge our students and educators to constantly improve toward the ultimate goal of college and career readiness."

Last year, to help states move forward with education reforms designed to improve academic achievement and increase the quality of instruction for all students, President Barack Obama and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan [outlined](#) how states could get relief from provisions of NCLB in exchange for serious state-led efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability and ensure that all students are on track to graduate college- and career-ready.

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Kentucky submitted its application for flexibility in November 2011. Kentucky requested waivers of provisions of NCLB, including determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), implementing school improvement requirements, allocation of federal improvement funding and more. States were required to address four principles in their requests for flexibility:

- college- and career-ready expectations for all students
- recognition, accountability and support for schools and districts
- support for effective instruction and leadership
- reduction of duplication and unnecessary reporting requirements

Since the passage of NCLB in 2001, Kentucky has used a two-tiered accountability model for its public schools and districts that provides both state- and federal-level designations. Now that the state's request for flexibility has been approved, the Unbridled Learning: College/Career Readiness for All Accountability Model will provide a single designation for both state and federal purposes. The accountability model also may be seen on the Unbridled Learning page.

SUMMARY OF KENTUCKY'S UNBRIDLED LEARNING ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

The mandates of 2009's Senate Bill 1, along with state regulations, provide the blueprint for Kentucky's public school accountability model.

Senate Bill 1 required Kentucky to begin a new assessment and accountability system in the 2011-12 school year. The assessment and accountability model is a balanced approach that incorporates all aspects of school and district work and is organized around the Kentucky Board of Education's four strategic priorities: next-generation learners, next-generation professionals, next-generation support systems and next-generation schools/districts.

Achievement, measured by tests in reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing, and Program Reviews in non-tested subjects such as arts and humanities and practical living/career studies are the heart of the model. Kentucky's model also places importance on identifying and closing achievement gaps among groups of students; providing support for low-performing schools; and linking teacher and principal evaluation information to educator preparation programs.

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The ultimate goal of the Unbridled Learning accountability model is to ensure that all students are prepared for college and/or career by the time they graduate from high school.

The first release of data related to the new accountability model will occur in late summer/early fall 2012. For the 2011-12 school year, schools and districts will be gauged on test scores, achievement gap reduction, student academic growth, college/career readiness percentages and graduation rates. Schools and districts will have annual measureable objectives to reach in all of these areas.

Additional measures, such as Program Reviews and percentages of effective teachers and leaders, will be added in future school years.

Each school and district will receive an overall score on a scale of 0 to 100, and each will be classified to determine recognition or support. There are four main classifications: Distinguished, Proficient, Progressing and Needs Improvement. Each year, based on those classifications and overall scores, schools and districts will be placed in categories for the purposes of recognition, support and consequences:

- **Kentucky Schools or Districts of Distinction** will include the highest-performing elementary, middle and high schools or districts – those that score at the 95th percentile or higher on the overall score.
- **Kentucky Highest-Performing Schools or Districts** will include elementary, middle and high schools or districts that score at the 90th percentile or higher on the overall score.
- **Kentucky High-Progress Schools or Districts** will include Title I and non-Title I schools showing the highest progress, as compared to their peers, and school districts showing the highest progress, as compared to their peers.
- **Kentucky Focus Schools or Districts** will include schools and districts whose achievement gap scores are low, high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent for two consecutive years and schools in which specific student groups' scores are low.
- **Kentucky Priority Schools or Districts** will include schools that have been identified as "Persistently Low-Achieving" (PLAs) as defined by KRS 160.346 and districts whose overall scores are in the bottom 5 percent of overall scores for all districts that have failed to make AMO and AYP for the last three consecutive years.

The Schools or Districts of Distinction, Highest-Performing Schools or Districts and High-Progress Schools or Districts will receive recognition of their achievements, such as Web logos and other promotional materials. These schools also will serve as models for lower-performing schools.

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The Focus Schools or Districts and the Priority Schools or Districts will engage in improvement activities that will include revision of their Comprehensive School or District Improvement Plans (CSIPs or CDIPs). These schools or districts also will receive ongoing assistance from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Focus Schools must use guidance from the Commissioner's Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council to write their needs assessments and revised CSIPs. Priority Schools must document meaningful family and community involvement in the strategies for improvement outlined in their CSIPs.

Priority Schools identified as "persistently low-achieving" will receive the supports and consequences outlined in [KRS 160.346](#) and [703 KAR 5:180](#).

The Kentucky Board of Education has approved several state regulations* that relate to the Unbridled Learning accountability model:

[703 KAR 5:070](#), Procedures for the inclusion of special populations in the state-required assessment and accountability programs – provides information on how students with disabilities and English-language learners are to be tested through state-level assessments.

[703 KAR 5:200](#), Next-Generation Learners – defines terms and categories and provides descriptions of how accountability measures are calculated.

[703 KAR 5:222](#), School and district accountability recognition, support and consequences – describes how schools and districts will be classified under the accountability system.

[703 KAR 5:230](#), Next Generation Instructional Programs and Support – provides details on Program Reviews.

[703 KAR 5:240](#), Accountability Definitions and Procedures – outlines how students are included in assessments and provides information about school participation in assessments.

***Please note that the language in the documents hyperlinked above may not reflect the most recent action of the Kentucky Board of Education.**

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